THE DELUGE

By DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS, Author of "THE COST," etc

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CHAPTER X.—Continued.

But my vanity was not done with me. Led on by it, I proceeded to have one of those ridiculous "generous impulses"—I persuaded myself that there must be some decency in this liberality, in addition to the prudence which I flattered myself was the chief cause. "I have been unjust to Roebuck," I thought. "I have been misjudging his character." And incredible though it seems, I said to him with a good deal of genuine emotion: "I don't know how to thank you, Mr. Roebuck. And, instead of trying, I want to apologize to you. I have thought many hard things against you; have spoken some of them. I had better have been attending to my own conscience, instead of criticising yours."

"Thank you, Blacklock," said he, in a voice that made me feel as if I were a little boy in the crossroads church, believing I could almost see the angels floating above the heads of the singers in the choir behind the preacher. "Thank you. I am not surprised that you have misjudged me. God has given me a great work to do, and those who do His will in this wicked world must expect martyrdom. I should never have had the courage to do what I have done, what He has done through me, had He not guided my every step."

XI.

ANITA.

On my first day in long trousers I may have been more ill at ease than I was that Sunday evening at the Ellersly's', but I doubt it.

When I came into their big drawing-room and took a look around at the assembled guests, I never felt more at home in my life. "Yes," said I to myself, as Mrs. Ellersly was greeting me and as I noted the friendly interest in the glances of the women, "this is where I belong. I'm beginning to come into my own."

As I look back on it now, I can't refrain from smiling at my own simplicity—and snobbishness. For, so determined was I to believe what I was working for was worth while, that I actually fancied there were upon these in reality ordinary people, ordinary in looks, ordinary in intelligence, some subtle marks of superiority, that made them at a glance superior to the common run. This ecstasy of snobbishness deluded me as to the women only—for, as I looked at the men, I at once felt myself their superior. They were an inconsequential, patterned lot. I even was better dressed than any of them, except possibly Mowbray Langdon, and if he showed to more advantage than I, it was because of his manner, which, as I have probably said before, is superior to that of any human being I've ever seen—man or woman.

"You are to take Anita in," said Mrs. Ellersly. With a laughable sense that I was doing myself proud, I crossed the room easily and took my stand in front of her. She shook hands with me politely enough. Langdon was sitting beside her; I had interrupted their conversation.

"Hello, Blacklock!" said Langdon, with a quizzical, satirical smile with the eyes only. "It seems strange to see you at such peaceful pursuits." His glance traveled over me critically—and that was the beginning of my trouble. Presently he rose, left me alone with her.

"You know Mr. Langdon?" she said, obviously because she felt she must say something.

"Oh, yes," I replied. "We are old friends. What a tremendous swell he is—really a swell." This with enthusiasm.

She made no comment. I debated with myself whether to go on talking of Langdon. I decided against it because all I knew of him had to do with matters down town—and Monson had impressed it upon me that down town was taboo in the drawing-room. I rummaged my brain in vain for another and suitable topic.

She sat, and I stood—she tranquil and beautiful and cold, I every instant more miserably self-conscious. When the start for the dining-room was made I offered her my left arm, though I had carefully planned beforehand just what I would do. She—without hesitation and, as I know now, out of sympathy for me in my suffering—was taking my wrong arm, when it flashed on me like a blinding blow in the face that I ought to be on the other side of her. I got red, tripped in the far-sprawling train of Mrs. Langdon, tore it slightly, tried to get to the other side of Miss Ellersly by walking in front of her, recovered myself somehow, stumbled round behind her, walked on her train and finally arrived at her left side, conscious in every red-hot atom of me that I was making a spectacle of myself and that the whole company was enjoying it. I must have seemed to them an ignorant boor; in fact, I had been about a great deal among people who knew how to behave, and had I never given the matter of how to conduct myself on that particular occasion an instant's thought, I should have got on without the least trouble.

It was with a sigh of profound relief that I sank upon the chair between Miss Ellersly and Mrs. Langdon, safe from danger of making "breaks," so I hoped, for the rest of the evening. But within a very few minutes I realized that my little misadventure had unnerved me. My hands were trembling so that I could scarcely lift the soup spoon to my lips, and my throat had got so far beyond control that I had difficulty in swallowing. Miss Ellersly and Mrs. Langdon were each busy with the man on the other side of her; I was left to my own reflections, and I was not sure whether this made me more or less uncomfortable. To add to my torment, I grew angry, with myself. I looked up and down and cross the big table, noted all these self-satisfied people perfectly at their ease; and I said to myself: "What's the matter with you, Matt? They're only men and women, and by no means the best specimens of the breed. You've got more brains than all of 'em put together, probably; is there one of the lot that could get a job at good wages if thrown on the world? What do you care what they think of you? It's a damn sight more important what you think of them, as it won't be many years before you'll hold everything they value, everything that makes them of consequence, in the hollow of your hand."

When the ladies withdrew, the other men drew together, talking of people I did not know and of things I did not care about—I thought then that they were avoiding me deliberately as a flock of tame ducks avoids a wild one that some wind has accidentally blown down among them. I know now that my forbidding aspect must have been responsible for my isolation. However, I sat alone, sullenly resisting old Ellersly's constrained efforts to get me into the conversation, and angrily suspicious that Langdon was enjoying my discomfiture more than the cigarette he was apparently absorbed in.

Old Ellersly, growing more and more nervous before my dark and sullen look, finally seated himself beside me. "I hope you'll stay after the others have gone," said he. "They'll leave early, and we can have a quiet smoke and talk."

All unstrung though I was, I yet had the desperate courage to resolve that I'd not leave, defeated in the eyes of the one person whose opinion I really cared about. "Very well," said I, in reply to him.

He and I did not follow the others to the drawing-room, but turned into the library adjoining. From where I seated myself I could see part of the drawing-room—saw the others leaving, saw Langdon lingering, ignoring the impatient glances of his wife, while he talked on and on with Miss Ellersly.

At last Langdon arose. It irritated me to see her color under that indifferent fascinating smile of his. It irritated me to note that he held her hand all the time he was saying goodby, and the fact that he held it as if he'd as lief not be holding it hardly lessened my longing to rush in and knock him down. What he did was all in the way of perfect good manners, and would have jarred no one not supersensitive, like me—and like his wife. I saw that she, too, was frowning.

In an aimless sort of way Miss Ellersly, after the Langdons had disappeared, left the drawing-room by the same door. Still aimlessly wandering, she drifted into the library by the hall door. As I rose, she lifted her eyes, saw me, and drove away the frown of annoyance which came over her face like the faintest haze. In fact, it may have existed only in my imagination. She opened a large, square silver box on the table, took out a cigarette, lighted it and holding it, with the smoke lazily curling up from it, between the long slender first and second fingers of her white hand, stood idly turning the leaves of a magazine. I threw my cigar into the fireplace. The slight sound as it struck made her jump, and I saw that, underneath her surface of perfect calm, she was in a nervous state full as tense as my own.

"You smoke?" said I.

"Sometimes," she replied. "It is soothing and distracting. I don't know how it is with others, but when I smoke my mind is quite empty."

"It's a nasty habit—smoking," said I.

"Do you think so?" said she, with the slightest lift to her tone and her eyebrows.

"Especially for a woman," I went on, because I could think of nothing else to say, and would not, at any cost, let this conversation, so hard to begin, die out.

"Your are one of those men who have one code for themselves and another for women," she replied.

"I'm a man," said I. "All men have the two codes."

"Not all," said she after a pause.

"All men of decent ideas," said I with emphasis.

"Really?" said she, in a tone that irritated me by suggesting that what I said was both absurd and unimportant.

"It is the first time I've ever seen a respectable woman smoke," I went on, powerless to change the subject, though conscious I was getting tedious. "I've read of such things, but I didn't believe."

"That is interesting," said she, her tone suggesting the reverse.

"I've offended you by saying frankly what I think," said I. "Of course, it's none of my business."

"Oh, no," replied she carelessly. "I'm not in the least offended. Prejudices always interest me."

I saw Ellersly and his wife sitting in the drawing-room, pretending to talk to each other. I understood that they were leaving me alone with her deliberately, and I began to suspect she was in the plot. I smiled, and my courage and self-possession returned as summarily as they had fled.

"I'm glad of this chance to get better acquainted with you," said I. "I've wanted it ever since I first saw you."

As I put this to her directly, she dropped her eyes and murmured something she probably wished me to think vaguely pleasant.

"You are the first woman I ever knew," I went on, "with whom it was hard for me to get on any sort of terms. I suppose it's my fault. I don't know this game yet. But I'll learn it, if you'll be a little patient; and when I do, I think I'll be able to keep up my end."

She looked at me—just looked. I couldn't begin to guess what was going on in that gracefully-poised head of hers.

"SHE LOOKED AT ME—JUST LOOKED."

"Will you try to be friends with me?" said I with directness.

She continued to look at me in that same steady, puzzling way.

"Will you?" I repeated.

"I have no choice," said she slowly.

I flushed. "What does that mean?" I demanded.

She threw a hurried and, it seemed to me, frightened glance toward the drawing-room. "I didn't intend to offend you," she said in a low voice. "You have been such a good friend to papa—I've no right to feel anything but friendship for you."

"I'm glad to hear you say that," said I. And I was; for those words of hers were the first expression of appreciation and gratitude I had ever got from any member of that family which I was holding up from ruin. I put out my hand, and she laid hers in it.

"There isn't anything I wouldn't do to earn your friendship, Miss Anita," I said, holding her hand tightly, feeling how lifeless it was, yet feeling, too, as if a flaming torch were being borne through me, were lighting a fire in every vein.

The scarlet poured into her face and neck, wave on wave, until I thought it would never cease to come. She snatched her hand away and from her face streamed proud resentment. God, how I loved her at that moment!

"Anita! Mr. Blacklock!" came from the other room, in her mother's voice. "Come in here and save us old people from boring each other to sleep."

She turned swiftly and went into the other room, I following. There were a few minutes of conversation—a monologue by her mother. Then I ceased to disregard Ellersly's less and less covert yawns, and rose to take leave. I could not look directly at Anita, but I was seeing that her eyes were fixed on me, as if by some compulsion, some sinister compulsion. I left in high spirits. "No matter why or how she looks at you," said I to myself. "All that is necessary is to get yourself noticed. After that the rest is easy. You must keep cool enough always to remember that under this glamour that intoxicates you, she's a woman, just a woman, waiting for a man."

XII.

"UNTIL TO-MORROW."

A week passed and, just as I was within sight of my limit of patience, Bromwell Ellersly appeared at my office. "I can't put my hand on the necessary cash, Mr. Blacklock—at least, not for a few days. Can I count on your further indulgence?" This in his best exhibit of old-fashioned courtliness—the "gentleman" through and through, ignorant of anything useful.

"Don't let that matter worry you, Ellersly," said I, friendly, for I wanted to be on a somewhat less business-like basis with that family. "The market's steady, and will go up before it goes down."

"Good!" said he. "By the way, you haven't kept your promise to call."

"I'm a busy man," said I. "You must make my excuses to your wife. But—in the evenings. Couldn't we get up a little theater party—Mrs. Ellersly and your daughter and you and I—Sam, too, if he cares to come?"

"Delightful!" cried he.

"Whichever one of the next five evenings you say," I said. "Let me know by to-morrow morning, will you?" And we talked no more of the neglected margins; we understood each other. When he left he had negotiated a three months' loan of twenty thousand dollars.

They were so surprised that they couldn't conceal it, when they were ushered into my apartment on the Wednesday evening they had fixed upon. If my taste in dress was somewhat too pronounced, my taste in my surroundings was not. I suppose the same instinct that made me like the music and the pictures and the books that were the products of superior minds had guided me right in architecture, decoration and furniture.

I was pleased out of all proportion to its value by what Ellersly and his wife looked and said. But, though I watched Miss Ellersly closely, though I tried to draw from her some comment on my belongings—on my pictures, on my superb tapestries, on the beautiful carving of my furniture—I got nothing from her beyond that first look of surprise and pleasure. Her face resumed its statuelike calm, her eyes did not wander, her lips, like a crimson bow painted upon her clear, white skin, remained closed. She spoke only when she was spoken to, and then as briefly as possible. The dinner—and a mighty good dinner it was—would have been memorable for strain and silence had not Mrs. Ellersly kept up her incessant chatter. I can't recall a word she said, but I admired her for being able to talk at all. I knew she was in the same state as the rest of us, yet she acted perfectly at her ease, and not until I thought it over afterward did I realize that she had done all the talking except answers to her occasional and cleverly-sprinkled direct questions.

(To be continued.)

Studying Human Nature.

But in the End the Crowd Drank With Both Bettors.

W. H. Milburn and several friends were walking along Sixteenth street the other day when one of them picked up a woman's handkerchief made of lace. "What shall I do with it?" he asked.

"Put it on the mail box at the corner and watch some poor woman steal it," suggested another of the party.

"It won't be a poor woman who steals it," said Mr. Milburn. "It will be some woman of means."

"I'll bet you it won't be a well-to-do woman," came from the other.

"What will you bet?"

"Refreshments for the crowd."

"Done," said Mr. Milburn. The handkerchief was placed on the mail box at Sixteenth and California and the men retired a few feet to see what would take place, says the Denver Post. Several poorly dressed women went by and saw the handkerchief, but none made any move to get it. At the end of four or five minutes a stylishly dressed woman came along and noticed the prize. She glanced about her and then took the handkerchief. Around the corner she stepped into her automobile.

"There," said Mr. Milburn, "what did I tell you?"

"You win," said the man that had the other end of the bet.

Just then they heard the woman speak to her chauffeur. "I lost my handkerchief, John," she said, "but found it again on that mail box. Wasn't I lucky?"

"Hold on," said the man who had bet with Mr. Milburn, when the auto had gone. "I don't know whether I lost that bet or not."

"To tell the truth, neither do I," replied Mr. Milburn.

"Then I think you both ought to pay the bet," said another member of the party.

And so it came to pass.

He Knew Maria.

"I could tell you what I think of you in a very few words."

"True, you could, Maria," responded Mr. Meekman. "But you won't. Maria you won't."

TRUST HIGH PRICES

COST OF COMMODITIES ARTIFICIALLY INCREASED.

At Least 25 Per Cent. of the Advance Is Tax Paid to Monopolies Protected by the Tariff.

The average price of commodities is now so high that it is most likely the highest point has been reached for this year and probably for a year or two to come. It is therefore of the utmost importance for consumers to understand why prices have advanced so rapidly since 1897, and especially those whose incomes have not increased in proportion to the cost of living. That a great percentage of the increase in prices has been artificially created by allowing the trusts a monopoly through tariff protection is plainly shown by the fact that as soon as the Dingley bill was enacted in 1897 organization of trusts, combines and pools was accomplished on an enormous scale and began to boost the prices of their products and have constantly increased prices to the present day. If you have saved your old bills for groceries, dry goods, etc., for 1896 or 1897, and compare them with your bills of to-day, you will see that the average increase in prices is over 50 per cent. Has your income increased in the same proportion, or are the trust high prices compelling you to economize? As the question of a high tariff or a low tariff is a political issue that must be decided at the coming national election you, of course, want to be sure of the facts, so that you can vote for the system that is best for your pocket. As but few people keep old bills, but destroy them after a year or two, it is well to have the actual statistics of the increase of prices to arrive at a correct solution of the question. What is known as "Dun's Index Number" is recognized officially as the most perfect statistics on the rise and fall of wholesale prices of all the most important articles of general consumption, and gives the value of the average amount used per capita.

On July 1, 1897, Dun's Index Number was $72.455. On March 1, 1907, it was $109.913, and on March 1, 1906, it was $104.204. The price level has therefore increased 5.5 per cent. during the past year and 51.7 per cent. during the past ten years.

All this enormous increase in prices is not, however, chargeable to the tariff protecting the trusts, for in England, which has a tariff for revenue, with comparatively no protection to her manufacturers, the prices of commodities have increased over 25 per cent. during the same period. This increase in England is charged to gold inflation and the rapidly depreciating value of that metal measured in commodities. As the effect of the increased production of gold is world-wide, gold inflation here has had the same effect as elsewhere, and therefore 25 per cent. of our advance in prices is due to it. This leaves over 25 per cent. of the increase in prices here chargeable to some other cause, and as the increase commenced in 1897, soon after our trust-protecting tariff bill became the law, it is conceded by the most eminent political economists, and not denied by the honest Republican standpatters, that the protection the trusts enjoy has allowed them to artificially advance the price of their products beyond the natural increase in prices through the depreciation in gold.

This increase of prices is the most important part of the tariff issue, for it directly affects the spending capacity of every family, especially those whose incomes and wages have not kept pace with the advance in prices.

Prosperity Under Low Tariff.

The last time this country had a tariff for revenue, as free from protection as any tariff could be, was from 1846 to 1861. That was a period of great prosperity. The census bureau has just published a special report on national wealth by decades, and these figures show that the national wealth more than doubled from 1850 to 1860, increasing from $7,135,780,228 to $16,159,616,068. That is an increase of over 135 per cent. during the time when a low tariff and what the protectionists call free trade prevailed. During the latter decades the increase was never nearly so great, and from 1880 to 1890 was only 50 per cent., and from 1890 to 1900 was less than 33 per cent., and during the past four years since 1900 the increase will be but little over 50 per cent. for the decade to 1910 at the same ratio of increase as for the past four years.

It is claimed by the stand-patters that all the prosperity this country has enjoyed is through protectionism, but neither the McKinley bill while it was in operation, nor the Dingley bill now, can compare as prosperity producers with the Democratic tariff for revenue period for 1850 to 1860. How will our protectionists explain these official figures?

A Resurrected Politician.

The Chicago Chronicle, which is nearly always on the wrong side of every political proposition, lately said: "When the people get through with a man it is for good and for all. There is absolutely no resurrection for a buried politician." Wrong, as usual. Look at Congressman J. W. Keifer of Springfield, O., who was elected speaker in 1881 and made such a mess of it that he was retired in disgrace when his constituents had another chance at him, and now the Republican party has reelected him in 1904, and again reelected him last year. A buried politician is just as good as any other to vote as the trusts and corporations tell him, and the Chronicle, which is owned by the corporation interests, should know it.

Ave Imperator!

"My spear" says the president, "knows no brother." "Those who oppose me," once said the German emperor, "I will crush." The comparison often drawn between these two eminent men continues to be interesting.—Providence Journal.

MAIL ORDER EVIL

ITS RISE IS NOT THE RESULT OF LEGITIMATE DEMAND.

DUE ENTIRELY TO GREED

And It Feeds Upon the Prosperity of the Country Towns—A Menace to the Nation.

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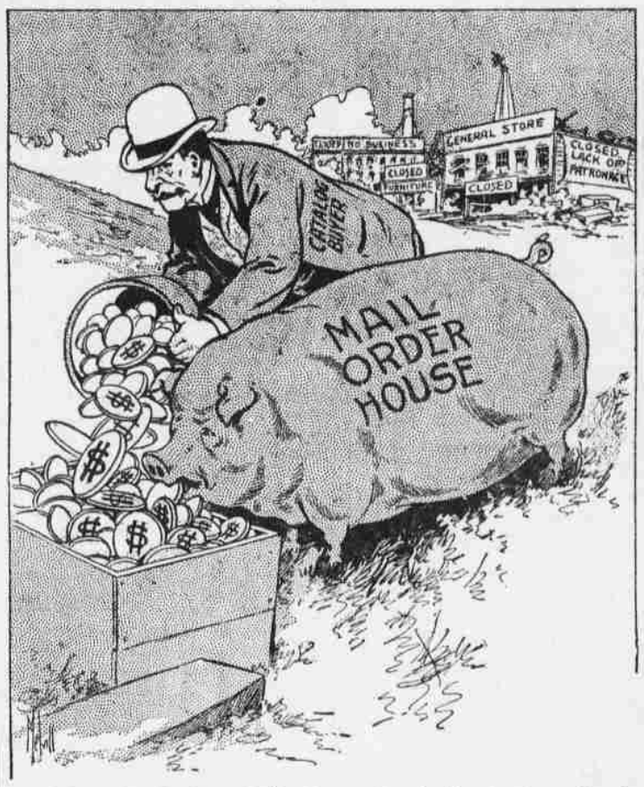
As the years go by we are more than ever brought face to face with the vital question of trading at home. During the past decade the habit of buying goods abroad has grown to such proportions that the country merchant may well feel alarmed at the probable outcome unless something is done to forestall the great calamity which will surely result therefrom.

Trade conditions 25 years ago were satisfactory. At that time catalogue houses were entirely unknown and country merchants were "monarchs of all they surveyed," so to speak, in the lines represented, and the people were prosperous and happy. Perhaps not so much because they generally had money enough to meet their wants, but because of the contentment that prevailed throughout the country at that time. The farmers raised good crops, generally, and received good prices for what they had to sell. They sold their surplus stuff to the local merchant and bought what they wanted; and this was the height of their ambition, hence the contentment that prevailed.



Are you, Mr. Resident of This Community, feeding to the mail order hog the dollars of this community? Are you pouring the money that should stay in the home town into the trough from which the gluttonous hogs of the city feed? If so you are doing not only the town, but yourself, an irreparable injury, and one that you should stop at once.

But in after years, when cities grew and trade expanded, the merchants of these cities not being content with conditions of trade, devised plans by which they might reach out for more business. Advertising in the newspapers being a cheap way of putting the merits of their goods before the people, this plan appealed to them and it was adopted. At first they operated on a small scale; then, as the merchant saw the opportunity for making it pay, he added to his advertising fund. And so it has continued until to-day millions of dollars are annually sent to mail order houses by the people of the United States.

The best and most effective way to throttle the catalogue house has been a question uppermost in the minds of country merchants for several years past; some advocating one plan and some another. There are several plans which might be presented to induce the farmer to buy at home. In the first place his pride might be appealed to. There are very few farmers who own their own farms but that would be interested in building up his own locality. He realizes the fact that if his farm is to be valuable it must be farmed in the most scientific manner and all buildings, fences, etc., must be kept up in the best possible shape, and above all the farm must be located not too far from some good town, for we all know that farm land brings a much better price when near to some good town or village. It is not hard to get the farmer to realize this, for if he ever sold any farm land or tried to sell any, he knows this to be a fact. Well, then, after he has realized this fact, the thing for him to do is to patronize his home merchants and business men, so they may be able to build and maintain a good town.

Public schools are much better in the towns than in the country for the reason that where the population is most dense, there is more taxable property to the amount of territory covered, hence there is more money collected for school purposes, and as a result more and better teachers are employed. All this is of the highest importance to the farmer, as most farmers who are of any importance in their profession are interested in giving their boys and girls a good education. And right here is where the good town proposition comes to him with great force. He knows he can send his children to the village school at a great deal less expense than to send them away to college, and that in most cases better results are obtained.

If the farmer seriously desires all these good things he must of necessity help to build them. Let him understand that he is one of the main spokes in the great wheel of commerce in his vicinity and that he can ill-afford to send abroad to purchase even the smallest item of merchandise, though it may seem to him that he is saving a few cents by doing so. There are a thousand and one items of expense which the city merchant has to meet that are entirely unknown to the country merchant.

The time is rapidly approaching when people who patronize mail order houses will be looked upon as "sooners" by the solid and influential citizens of all commonwealths and will suffer ostracism at their hands.

Cities and towns are built by combined efforts of the residents thereof; not by foreign capital. So too are our churches and schoolhouses built. It may be true that in many instances eastern capital has been employed to make improvements in the west, but always with good round interest to the lender of the money. No one ever heard of a case where an eastern man or firm contributed to western enterprise for the fun of the thing. Nor did you ever hear of a case where any mail order or catalogue house ever contributed to any church building fund. Nor yet did they ever build or help to build any of our schoolhouses. You never heard of a case of this kind and you never will. All these eastern sharks care for is your dollar, and you know it, and when they have gotten that they have no more use for you. Then why should you patronize them? You can go to your home merchant any day in the year and if you are short of change, he will extend you credit. If you are sick and unable to work the home merchant will see that your family is provisioned until you get on your feet again. He will do all of this and at the same time furnish the same grade of goods at the same or even at a less price. Will the catalogue merchant do this?

A society could be organized and designated as the "People's Protective Association." An organization of this kind could be perfected in every town and hamlet in the country. Merchants and business men would push these organizations for the reason that it would be to their interest to do so. After the organization is formed and things are running smoothly questions of the day may be discussed, and also matters pertaining to the welfare of the immediate locality may be brought up which will include the important question of trading at home. Of course it will be admitted that this question will have to be handled with gloves on. But there are men in business in every town who are equal to the emergency and no trouble is anticipated in getting the farmers and others who buy of mail order houses to listen to reason.

Teach the farmer to love his country, his town and his people; make him realize that they are his; that they are a part of his being, his life. Teach him that it is to his financial, moral and social interest to buy his goods in his home town, and if he be a man he will do it.

J. F. BELL.

Burden We Would All Assume.

Rich may be a burden, but few of us are willing to kick at a burden of that kind.